

Sustainable Biodiesel Principles

In response to mounting concerns about global warming and the United States dependence on foreign oil, biofuel production is growing rapidly. This shift from fossil fuels to biofuels has the potential to reduce global warming emissions; lessen the United States dependence on petroleum and create new jobs for rural and urban communities.

To assure that biofuels achieves these goals, it is critical that biofuel production be done in an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable manner. These draft principles, presented by the Sustainable Biodiesel Alliance for discussion, revision and eventual adoption, are a first step towards identifying through a broad stakeholder process, the key sustainability concerns around biofuels, specifically biodiesel production in the United States. Following their completion, these principles may serve as a basis for standards and criteria for a biodiesel certification process or as a framework for drafting more specific codes of practice for sustainable biodiesel production and use.

How the Sustainable Biodiesel Principles Were Drafted

The SBA worked with farmers, agricultural and environmental organizations, academics, renewable energy experts, and experts within the biodiesel industry to create these draft principles for sustainable biodiesel production. In drafting these principles, we drew heavily from existing Sustainable Biomass Principles including those drafted by the Institute for Agriculture Trade and Policy (IATP), Friends of the Earth (FoE) and the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB). Please note that IATP's, FoE's and RSB's Principles are still in the process of being developed based on feedback from a wide array of stakeholders. Through a broad, multi-stakeholder process, the SBA will continue to revise the attached Principles with the view that the Principles are adopted by key stakeholders in the biofuel community.

Some participants in the multi-stakeholder process SBA is facilitating are also participating in the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) – an international process seeking to create a global standard for sustainable biofuels. The SBA process differs from the RSB in that the SBA is seeking to tailor its Principles, Criteria and Standards specifically to the U.S. biofuels market, more specifically to the U.S. biodiesel market.

Since many of the biodiesel issues SBA is addressing are the same issues faced by biofuels, the SBA plans to eventually expand into addressing other biofuels as well.

Following the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Social and Environmental Standard Setting www.isealalliance.org, the SBA will be modeling our certification process after other well known voluntary certification systems including the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system and The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings.

For example, certification systems like the FSC, break their work down according to the following steps:

Principles - general tenets of sustainable production.

Criteria - conditions to be met to achieve these tenets.

Indicators - how a farm, producer, or company could prove that a particular criterion is met.

The attached draft principles represent a first attempt to bring together the discussions regarding sustainable biofuels that are taking place in the United States.

The SBA invites comments and feedback on the content and wording of these principles.

Working groups, divided according to the key stages of the biodiesel lifecycle, were created in June 2007 to consider criteria that could be used to measure performance against these draft principles. For example, in June 2007, a feedstock working group and a plant working group were launched. We will be adding additional working groups as the multi-stakeholder process evolves. The goal is to have a solid draft of Principles by the end of 2007 and a solid draft of criteria by the Spring of 2008. As the speed of the process is determined by the stakeholders in the various working groups, the aforementioned dates are suggested dates that may alter based on the speed with which consensus is reached in the respective working groups.

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Draft 5

Please note that these Principles do not necessarily reflect best practices currently being utilized. Rather these Principles outline what stakeholders agree constitute best practices biodiesel producers should strive towards.

Environmental

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Biofuels should result in significantly lower GHG emissions compared to fossil fuels when analyzed via a lifecycle assessment. This should include direct and indirect GHG emissions, for instance, from fossil energy used in growing, transporting and processing biofuels. It should also include GHG emissions resulting from land use changes where land is converted to biofuel crop production.

Soil

Biofuel production should not degrade or damage soils.

Water

Biofuel production should not contaminate or deplete water resources.

Air

Biofuel production should not lead to air pollution.

Biodiversity Conservation

Biofuel production should not lead to the destruction, degradation or declassification of high conservation value areas, areas of high biodiversity; habitats of rare, threatened or endangered species; or rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems. Protected areas, including forested areas, should not be declassified or appropriated for biofuel crop production. At the landscape level, biofuel production systems should contribute to the conservation and maintenance of native biological diversity.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

Biofuels should ideally be derived from non-GMO feedstocks.

Agrochemicals

Biofuel crop production should minimize, and eliminate whenever possible, the use of dangerous agrochemicals. Agrochemicals that are hazardous to the environment, workers, and local communities should be used only as a last resort. Chemicals used should be non-persistent. Chemicals that are endocrine disrupting, carcinogenic or mutagenic in humans should be eventually phased out. Preference should be given to the selection of crops and cropping systems that are productive and sustainable without reliance on agro-chemicals.

Social

Food Security

Large-scale production of biofuels should not jeopardize food security. Biofuel production should not be the cause either directly or indirectly of the displacement of land used for growing critical food crops.

Local Communities should be an integral part of the development of the biofuel industry. Local strategies for biofuel production with citizen input should be created.

Communities and Workers. Family and smallholder farmers should not be displaced to grow or harvest biofuel feedstocks. Farmers should receive fair compensation for biofuel feedstocks and the products they produce. The health and safety of workers and communities should be protected. In addition, fair wages for agricultural workers and workers at biofuel production facilities should be ensured.

Communities and Farmers Producing Biofuels. Communities and farmers producing biofuels should have, to the greatest extent possible, ownership of biofuel production and processing facilities. Income generated from biofuel production should be kept to the greatest extent possible, within local producing communities from the feedstock to processing facilities. In addition, the creation of appropriate sectoral jobs in local communities should be promoted.

Local consumption should be prioritized over transporting or exporting biomass or biomass energy and products away from the communities and regions that produce them.

